



**STATE OF WISCONSIN  
Public Records Board**

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To: Local Government Officials

From: Bryan Naab, Chair Public Records Board

Subject: General Records Schedule for Common Records

At a recent meeting the Public Records Board extended discretion to local units of government to dispose of certain common records in less than seven years and without further notification to either the Board or the Wisconsin Historical Society. State agencies have had this authority since August 1998. The Board has the authority to grant this discretion under Wis. Stat. 19.21.

The purpose of the *General Records Schedule: Common Records in Wisconsin State Agencies and Local Units of Government* is to allow the identified types of low value records in any media: paper or electronic (including sent and received e-mail) in this schedule to be destroyed in "the normal course of business".

State agencies and local units of government should remember that even common records identified in this general schedule may be subject to an open record request, litigation or audit. In these circumstances a "hold" barring routine destruction of the identified records must be put in effect. Such a hold stays in effect until the specific circumstances surrounding the use of the record are resolved. If you are uncertain about when to lift the "hold" on destruction of records contact your agency legal counsel.

If you have questions about the interpretation of this general schedule first contact your designated agency records officer/contact or agency legal counsel. Should you need further assistance you may contact Steve Hirsch, Executive Secretary at 608 266-2996 or e-mail at [steve.hirsch@doa.state.wi.us](mailto:steve.hirsch@doa.state.wi.us)

Attached is a copy of the general records schedule. The document can also be found on the DOA Records Management web site: URL <http://www.doa.state.wi.us/dsas/recordsmgmt/>

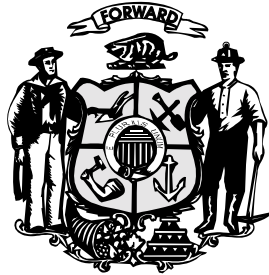
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CC:

Board Members

**General Records Schedule:**

**Common Records In Wisconsin State Agencies  
and Local Units of Government**



For use by  
State of Wisconsin Government Agencies

Approved by  
**Public Records Board**  
Effective August 1998  
Revised May 2002

## **I. Introduction**

Records are a basic tool of government administration. They provide information for planning and decision making and are a foundation for government accountability. This document contains guidelines for complying with legal, fiscal and administrative requirements for records retention and provides advice on cost-effective management of records commonly found in state and local government agencies. The schedule provides legal authorization to dispose of common records on a regularly scheduled basis.

The DOA Records Management Section prepared this schedule. It has been reviewed, approved and authorized for statewide use by the Public Records Board pursuant to Wisconsin Statute 16.61.

State agencies and local governments may use general schedules issued by the Public Records Board for any applicable records in its custody. No further notification is required.

Because Wisconsin Statutes define records broadly many common records are public records although they have little continuing value once their purpose has been served. This schedule provides a convenient way to dispose of these records and comply with state records law.

This general schedule does not require that state agencies or local units of government create these types of records. It provides policy guidance for organizations that create or receive these types of records.

Additional types of record series may be added to this general schedule.

State agencies and local units of government should remember that even common records identified in this general schedule may be subject to an open record requests, litigation or audit. In these circumstances a "hold" barring routine destruction of the identified records must be put in effect. Such a hold stays in effect until the specific circumstances surrounding the use of the record are resolved. If you are uncertain about when to lift the "hold" on destruction of records contact your agency legal counsel.

## **II. Implementing this Schedule**

Good records management involves controlling the records from the point of creation or receipt to final disposition through destruction or transfer to an archival repository. This schedule and the following suggestions can help staff control the creation, distribution, storage and disposition of administrative records.

Common records contained in this schedule by their nature are not confidential. Therefore access to these records is open and no special handling procedures are required. If in doubt as to whether or not a specific record is confidential, it is always a good idea to check with legal counsel. If your agency does not have a legal counsel an Assistant Attorney General in the Department of Justice should be able to provide advice.

Some common records in this schedule may contain personally identifiable information within the meaning of this term, as defined in s. 19.62(5), Wis. Stats. The types of records that contain personally identifiable information include records with names and social security numbers. Agencies should be aware of the requirements in Subchapter IV, Personal Information Practices, Chapter 19 of the state statutes.

### **A. Historical Records Not Included**

This general schedule does not include any records with historical value. Therefore neither the State Historical Society of Wisconsin nor UW archival institutions need be notified prior to destruction of these records.

Should future additions to this schedule include records with historical value they will be specifically identified and this section modified to provide guidance on how to transfer rather than destroy the records.

## **B. Relate Agency Administrative Records to Specific Schedule Entries**

This schedule covers all copies of records whether maintained centrally in headquarters or in a regional or district office. It also covers copies of records maintained elsewhere in large organizations. The record series descriptions are intended to include a wide variety of ways in which agencies maintain their records. Therefore the titles and descriptions of the record may not reflect the exact title or filing arrangements used by each agency. State agencies and local units of government have considerable flexibility in applying the schedule to their specific needs as long as records are kept at least as long as the minimum time period set forth in the schedule. State agencies and local units of government should review the title, description of the record series, and the notes to help determine whether an item applies to a particular title contained in this document.

If you are uncertain or if you need assistance state agency staff should contact your designated agency Records officer. Local government officials may not have a designated records officer and therefore should contact program managers within your organization. The DOA Records Management staff may also be contacted for advice and assistance.

## **C. Multiple Copies of Records**

Many records are created or received in multiple copies. This general schedule provides retention periods for all copies of records retained at all levels of any state agency or local unit of government.

## **D. Use of this Schedule for Records Maintained on Electronic, Magnetic or Optical Formats**

This general schedule applies to all records regardless of their format or media, including all types of records maintained in electronic formats.

## **E. Dispose of Records on a Regular Basis**

Once adopted by the Public Records Board state agencies and local units of government should use this schedule to dispose of obsolete records on a continuing basis after their minimum retention periods have been met. *No further state approval is required.*

Disposition should be carried out periodically (generally at least once a year). To facilitate orderly disposition of paper records, staff should review filing arrangements, cut off files periodically, and develop procedures to segregate inactive and obsolete files.

State agencies and local units of government should also develop and implement procedures for effective purging of electronic records on a regular basis. Disposition of electronic records can include downloading them to off-line storage media and eventual deletion or erasure. If files have not been purged for several years, this schedule may identify a significant volume of obsolete records that can be destroyed immediately.

There are several tools available to assist in the management of records. These include the State of Wisconsin Filing System Design and Implementation, 1991; Guidelines for Management of Electronic Information, 1993 and various records management related fact sheets that are accessible from our Web-site.

## **F. Retention of Records Longer Than the Authorized Minimum Period**

Generally records should be destroyed when the minimum retention period has been met unless a legal, audit, or open records request "hold" has been placed on the records. Obsolete records consume expensive office space and computer storage capacity, and they hinder efficient access and retrieval of current records. Use of the schedule will allow destruction of inactive records when they become obsolete in a timely manner and efficient manner.

If other specific temporary situations occur that requires longer retention of these administrative records longer than specified agencies may keep the records longer. There is no absolute requirement to destroy these records at the end of the retention period and agencies are not required to inform the Public Records Board if they intend to keep the records longer. However if this becomes a regular business practice, agencies should document this intent in their written internal procedures. *Agencies need not submit separate RDA's for records that are retained longer than the retention periods in this schedule.*

## **G. Store Inactive Records Off-Site**

The State Records Center provides safe, low-cost storage and reference and retrieval services for inactive records. State agencies and local units of government may use the State Records for records covered by established and approved retention policies. However due to the short-term nature of the records identified in this schedule, it generally is more appropriate to routinely destroy these records directly from each office area.

## **H. Training Available**

Annually a training program is offered for state agency personnel on a variety of records management topics. DOA Records Management staff can assist you in learning about these and other services and in coordinating their delivery to your agency.

## **I. Sources of Additional Information and Assistance**

Each state agency has a designated **records officer** who coordinates the agency's records management program and serves as primary contact for agency staff seeking information on adoption and use of general schedules. Larger agencies usually have area records coordinators.

The DOA Records Management Section, in conjunction with the agency records officer, assists agencies in developing or improving records access, storage, and retrieval systems.

For additional assistance contact your agency records officer or area records coordinator.

Local government officials should contact appropriate management staff for information on adoption and use of general record schedules.

If you do not know who the records officer is for your agency or have general questions call the DOA Records Section at 608 266-2996.

Note: Material from the General Retention and Disposition Schedule for New York State Government Records, Effective April 1997 modified to meet the State of Wisconsin environment, was utilized in developing these materials,

## **III. Record Series Covered in this General Schedule By Function**

### **I. Activity/Production Scheduling and Reporting**

90500000      Routine Activity and Production Reports for Individuals

Occasional and periodic reports, work load reports, progress reports, backlog and production reports for individuals.

Retention:      Event    When superseded or obsolete

Disposition:    Destroy

Note: Cumulative and summary reports used to monitor and document recurring activities or production at units, sections, bureaus, and division levels in an organization should be scheduled separately under a specific agency RDA.

90500001      Routine Scheduling Records

Calendars, appointment books, schedules, diaries and logs used by agencies and program units to schedule and document routine activities such as meetings, work shifts, telephone or front desk coverage, and time off or vacations.

Retention:      Event    When superseded or obsolete

Disposition:    Destroy

Note: Daily, weekly, and monthly schedules of high level officials such as the Governor, elected local government officials, agency heads, their deputies and assistants, and agency division administrators, the heads of program offices, and commissioners are not covered under this schedule. Unique substantive records relating to the activities of these individuals including their appointment schedules must be covered by a specific agency RDA.

**B. Organizing Tools**

90500002      Suspense Files

Documents arranged in a chronological order as a note or reminder that an action is required on a given date or that a reply to action is expected and, if not received should be traced on a given date. Includes data generated from computer software such as Microsoft Outlook that assist in the management of required follow-up.

Retention:      Event=Date action is taken

Disposition:    Destroy

Note: If the suspense copy is an extra copy destroy when the event occurs. If the suspense copy is the file copy, incorporate it into the official file.

90500003      Tracking and Control Records

Logs, registers, and other records used to control or document the status of correspondence, reports, or other records that are authorized for destruction by a general or agency specific records schedule.

Retention:      Event    Delete when no longer needed.

Disposition:    Destroy

90500004      Indexes and Finding Aids

Indexes, lists, registers and other finding aids used to provide access to records authorized for destruction by a general or agency specific records schedule. Record series where indexes and other finding aids form a unique record are excluded from this schedule.

Retention: Event Delete with the related records.

Disposition: Destroy

Note: For record series with historical value case related indexes must be transferred to the archival repository concurrently with the records.

### **C. Routine Material**

#### 90500005 Transitory Files

Documents of short-term interest which have no documentary or evidential value and normally need not be kept for more than 90 days. Examples include:

- routine requests for information or publications and copies of replies, which require no administrative action, no policy decision, and no special compilation or research to reply.
- Originating office copies of letters of transmittals that do not add any information to that contained in the transmitted material, and receiving office copy if filed separately from the transmitted material.
- Quasi-official notices including memoranda and other records that do not serve as the basis of official actions, such as notices of holidays, or charity drives, bond campaigns and similar records.

Retention: Event Destroy when three months old, or when no longer needed, whichever is sooner.

Disposition: Destroy

#### 90500006 Mailing Address Lists

Printed and automated mailing lists used to send bulk mailings or to mail materials to subscribers or regular recipients.

Retention: Destroy after lists are updated or withdrawn

Disposition: Destroy